



Near South Proposal Community Meeting #2:
Proposed Reassignment Boundary Change of National Teachers Academy
Tuesday, January 16, 2018
Second Presbyterian Church, 1936 Michigan Avenue
Time: 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

CPS Staff in Attendance

Herald “Chip” Johnson, Shani Boone, Luis Rodriguez, Onshelle Blackmon, Tiffany Taylor, Judy Camacho, Liz Kirby, Jimm Dispensa, Alan Conley, Lori Fuentes, Marcus Pittman, Thyatiria Towns, Keda Jeter, Kareem Pender, Carl Hurdlik, Estefany Alvarez, Morris Ross, Zeb Everette, Nicole Haynes, Mark Scott, Emily Shores, Emily Bolton, Lauro Roman, Carly Lonergan, Faith Pritchard.

CPS Presentation (6:00 p.m. – 6:19 p.m.)

Chip Johnson started the meeting by introducing himself, presenting the meeting agenda and topics. He then stated that Reverend Cure wanted to maintain “fidelity of worship service” by keeping “our language respectful.”

Mr. Johnson then stated that the representatives from ODLSS, STLS, and the Talent Office would be available for 30 minutes to answer questions after the meeting.

Mr. Johnson then explained the meeting logistics. He explained that during the two-hour meeting, CPS would present on the proposed school action then participants would have the opportunity to provide feedback. He explained that participants could email questions and comments to transitions@cps.edu and can find additional information at www.cps.edu/transitions.

Mr. Johnson then reviewed the CPS legal timeline, who has provided feedback, and where the feedback was provided over the past year.

Mr. Johnson then gave an overview of the proposed school actions. He explained that the proposed changes for the New South Loop Building and for the High School conversion will begin in SY 2019-2020. He explained that CPS is proposing to build a new elementary school for the Near South Community, to have three buildings in the South Loop, and to expand the South Loop boundaries to incorporate the current NTA boundaries. He continued to explain that NTA will gradually convert to a high school, that rising NTA grades 1-3 would be reassigned to South Loop and grades 4-8 can remain at and graduate from NTA or transfer to South Loop. He explained that all NTA students will have a guaranteed seat at the high school regardless of where they live.

Mr. Johnson went on to explain the details of the proposed high school conversation, including the timeline at NTA by school year. The proposed conversion will begin by transitioning rising NTA Pre-K – 3rd graders to South Loop in SY 2019-20. He restated that all NTA students will have a guaranteed seat regardless of where they live. He explained that the conversion will be gradual and that elementary school grades will eventually be phased out. He reviewed the timeline by school year, explaining that by SY 2024-25+ NTA will include grades 9-12 and that transitions will be managed with safety and security considerations.

Mr. Johnson then gave an overview of the proposed NTA student transition for SY 2019-20, starting with relocating the Pre-K to South Loop ES. He explained the transitions for the kindergarten neighborhood track, the rising 1st-3rd grade neighborhood track, the rising 4th-8th grade neighborhood track, the kindergarten RGC track, the rising 1st-3rd grade RGC track and the rising 4th-8th grade RGC track. He explained that students will be reassigned to South Loop ES, can enroll in another school, or transfer to South Loop ES in subsequent years. He then stated that staff from OAE will have options available if families choose to explore those.

Mr. Johnson then gave an overview of the re-assignment boundary change for elementary schools. As he was explaining how the boundary will change, a group of meeting participants stood up and began chanting, “if we don’t get it, shut it down” for about two minutes. Mr. Johnson responded by thanking the group of participants and continuing to explain the phase out of the grades. The group of participants continued to chant and Mr. Johnson responded by explaining that he understood their passion and need, that there were others who wanted to listen to the proposal and who have choices and asked participants to respect the equity of the presentation.

Mr. Johnson then began explaining the transition supports and the high school boundaries. As he was doing so, a group of meeting participants began chanting. Mr. Johnson continued to state the details of the proposal as a group of participants continued to chant.

Mr. Johnson then explained the public feedback process. As he was doing so, a group of meeting participants were chanting “black lives matter, black students matter.” He responded by saying, “try to maintain your respect.”

Public Comments (6:19 p.m. - 7:57 p.m.)

Brittany Wilson, Community Member

Brittany explained that education is the most important priority, that there’s a need to give students a selection.

Unknown, Parent of NTA Scholars

She explained that this proposal would be splitting her children up over 3 different buildings. She stated that this proposal is not best practices and that everyone has a high school. She further explained that the high school in her neighborhood is a level 2

and that if someone doesn't like their neighborhood high school that they're insinuating that the neighborhood school isn't good enough.

MS, 3rd Grader at NTA

MS explained that he has been at NTA since kindergarten and that the people there were like a second family. He explained that NTA has the most amazing teachers who make learning exciting and fun and help their students understand. He explained that NTA has Second Step, which allows them make friends outside of regular homeroom, encourages partnership with other classrooms, allows students to get to know a lot of other teachers. He said that the plan to convert NTA into a high school is wrong. He explained how the proposed actions would affect his family and the NTA community negatively.

Nalliah, NTA Parent of a Kindergartener and a 4th Grader

She wanted to put on record the emails that they were made aware of from Alderman Pat Dowell to Barbara Byrd-Bennett. She also explained that the mayor attended an Easter egg hunt and said that he would work to bring a neighborhood high school. She referenced an email from April 2015. She stated that this is evidence that the proposal is stemming from political plan between the mayor and a wealthy group. She said that there is a desire to remove children from the area and segregating black and brown kids out of the area.

Veronica Schmidt, NTA Parent

Veronica stated that the proposal is a directive from the mayor's office. She asked, "Why is CPS ignoring alternatives?" She then stated that 75% of NTA students are African American and low-income. She asked, "Why did Janice Jackson purposely mislead the board by saying that the Level 1 status [of the school] was achieved by a gifted program?" She said that Janice Jackson is willing to make false statements. She then asked when CPS has made a decision to close an elementary school. She said that CPS violates their own rules when the mayor directs them to do so.

KC, 1st Grader at NTA

He thanked his teachers and the principal of NTA. He said that they were great and that the school should not close.

Unknown, Parent of 1st grader at NTA

They stated that the proposal is taking advantage of people who don't have any place to go. He questioned the time that some families are stating it takes to commute to and from their school. He concluded by saying that students are already molded by the time they are in high school.

Unknown, NTA Community Member

They stated that Long Grove students were kicked out, that Janice Jackson was misleading the board and community. They said that families rely on CPS for quality, but that CPS is misrepresenting the truth about data to comply with mayor's agenda. They quoted Dr. Janice Jackson. They said Dr. Jackson's statement was an attempt to

sway the future vote, that CPS has lied about student achievement to achieve the mayor's orders. They said that these statements about student achievement have no basis. They concluded by saying that all forwarded information must be deemed untrustworthy.

Tatiana, NTA Parent

She explained that she has 4 daughters at NTA. She said that CPS should strive to build a new high school rather than "shoveling kids out." She explained that NTA is a Level 1+ school and it is "what every school in the city strives to be." She then asked, "Why misplace students, staff and the community?" She concluded by saying that they need a new high school.

Brittany Williams, NTA Community Member

She said that the NTA community deserves an equal opportunity and that the proposal is just not right.

Aaron Sanders, NTA Community Member

Aaron stated that the mayor's office was directing CPS to convert NTA into a HS. He showed a picture of the mayor at the Easter egg hunt and said that after that Easter egg hunt, the mayor's office began leading discussion to close NTA in 2016. He stated that during discussion with mayor's office to turn NTA into a high school, CPS didn't look at other options. He said that Janice Jackson confirmed this on the record. He said that the mayor is turning NTA into a high school for political gain. He stated that a racial equity analysis concluded that there were plenty of options and believed that they would be able to pull together 30-50 million dollars to build a new high school.

MM, NTA Student

MM said that he's been at NTA since 3rd grade and that it is like a second family. He stated that the proposed action is an act of prejudice against his school and that CPS should not convert it because it just gained the status of 1+. He said that the school community has been showing that they can work hard and achieve on their own. He said that the NTA community shouldn't be acted against because of their race. He then said that if CPS wants to convert their school then they should just shut it down because the NTA community won't be the same school.

Unknown, Community Member living in Bronzeville

She explained that they have lived in Bronzeville since 1999. She applauded parents and students on both sides who care "this much about education." She asked, "wouldn't we all be in a different position if we had more parents who cared and had more teachers who were [in schools] for more than just a pay check?" She explained that she has received teaching credentials and certifications and has taught in several CPS schools, beginning as a substitute. She stated that she was glad that she "got out of teaching" because she realized that it wasn't her calling. She said that teachers should only be in schools if it's their calling. She then said that some people are turning the proposal into something it's not. She stated that she has been called a racist and that she wouldn't live on the 29th of Michigan if she were. She said that there is a need to

“tone it down” and that meeting participants shouldn’t “threaten people by saying it’s the hunger games.” She concluded by saying that most “good parents” are not promoting violence.

Patricia Crosby, Parent of 6 NTA Students

Patricia stated that she used to live where NTA is located. She remembers CPS telling community members “the same thing Chip said,” that the kids in that area would be able to go to NTA no matter where they lived. She said this was later reneged. She then explained that she moved into Section 8 housing and it was a challenge to get her kids into NTA. She said she needed to use a family member’s address to do so. She then explained that it became easier years down the road and she could put other children into NTA because she was a foster parent. She concluded by saying that she doesn’t believe CPS when they say that NTA students could enroll because CPS has already lied.

David Wu, CBCAC/Chinatown Community Member

David said that he is a Chinatown resident and that there is a lack of high schools in Chinatown. He explained that CPS’ plan creates one of the most diverse high schools in Chicago. He said that the student body would consist of 41% Asian, 21% AA, 19% Hispanic, 10% White, and 8% other. He checked to see how many other schools were similar and out of 46 different high schools only 4 had at least 10% of students who were Asian. He concluded by saying that funds that were being dispersed in the past were allocated to Englewood and that the new high school would be uniquely diverse.

Elizabeth Greer, NTA Community Member

Elizabeth began by asking, “What is the request for the proposal for this action? Who and when did they submit this proposal?” She said that she is looking for the answer. She said that she wants to know if this request came from Pat Dowell to mayor. She said that Dowell wrote about supporting the effort of overcrowding in South Loop and investing in the conversion of NTA to a high school. She said that Barbara Byrd-Bennett was copied on that email and that 9 months later NTA’s principal sent an email to Alderman Dowell asking about the conversion. She said that the alderman responded by saying that NTA was not included and that it wasn’t a real plan at that time. Elizabeth concluded by saying that the email strand is evidence that NTA’s principal has been lied to and that NTA has been left out of the conversation for years.

Unknown, Parent of 3.5-year-old in the South Loop

This parent began by quoting Martin Luther King Jr. She said that she wanted to speak about Philips High School. She said that she joined as a volunteer and that many Philips HS parents don’t have the capacity to come to community meetings. She decided that as a parent in South Loop she would invest in a high school in case her child wasn’t enrolled in selective enrollment. She concluded by saying that Philips HS doesn’t have a librarian there and that she thinks that is sad. She questioned why they don’t have a librarian.

PC, 7th Grader at NTA

PC explained that the proposed actions would be taking away something for kids. He explained that NTA is a second family to the students and the students are taught to love each other, themselves and their education.

Debbie Lu, CBCAC and Bridgeport Community member

Debbie was born and raised in Bridgeport. She said that the community is moving towards progress and that the majority of Asian families are not the model minority. She said that many parents are immigrants, work low-skill jobs, and that families strive for upward mobility. She said that a high school must incorporate a diverse student body. She said that the proposal is imperfect, but provides an improved educational outcome at a near-by location. She concluded by saying that she hopes that her future children will have a diverse school experience.

David, NTA Parent

David said that he is a CPS employee, but was speaking as a parent. He said that NTA should not be closed because of what it represents to the students, parents and community. He said that the greatness of a school is determined by relationships. He said that he has to explain to his daughter why she has to leave her school and doesn't have a good answer. He said that the truth is that if she was going to a school that wasn't preeminently African American and low-income that she wouldn't have to leave because they would have the means to stand up for it.

Eve Ewing, Community Member

Eve began by explaining her credentials and experience as a CPS student and teacher. She said that she wanted to address people in the room who are not associated with NTA. She said that "we did not celebrate MLK by being respectful." She said that NTA parents have been respectful and have been respectfully engaged. She said that this didn't work and that there is a reason that participants are not being respectful. She said that the 12,000 people who were displaced did follow the rules. She said that 88% of the students were Black and that this was the same song, different day. She said that none of the people who make the decisions are in the room. She said that she sees CPS employees trying to do the right thing, but that people are being pitted against each other. She concluded by saying that all children deserve a good school.

OW, NTA Student

OW agreed with his brother and friends that the proposed action would be taking away a second family. He said that everyone loves NTA and "everyone loves everyone no matter skin color, religion, etc." He said that every staff member showed up that day and that they were there to stop what CPS is doing because if CPS takes away their school, they'd be taking away how people live and think about other people. He said that they are being respectful, that they're waiting, and being quiet. He then asked, "how are we supposed to explain how we feel about this?" He said that the proposed action is not only taking away education, but also taking away people's lives. He concluded by

saying that students won't get a chance to see how people feel, to see other religions, and diverse people.

Corey Harris, NTA parent

Corey began by saying that "racism is prejudice alongside power." He said that with power and prejudice, CPS is taking a school that has become pillar of community, a school where kids look forward to going to. He said that kids from Chinatown are experiencing something similar. He said that Caucasian parents have taken a chance enrolling students into predominantly black school and "got a chance to see that we can work together." He then said that there are "such poor parents in [their] community that they have to take on 2 jobs to make ends meet." He concluded by saying that they need to bring something back to their community other than the bad things one sees on TV.

Matsuo Marti, South Loop ES Parent

He began by asking who is being served by this decision. He quoted an article explaining that black/white achievements are not narrowing. He said that data is not made public. He said that 8/10 students that are not meeting grade level proficiency are Black. He said that eliminating NTA does not serve black students. He said that students would be transitioned to a school that doesn't serve black students. He concluded by quoting MLK about changing the system.

Jeffrey Ayersman, South Loop Resident

Jeffrey recognized Pastor David. He explained that he has been a South Loop resident for 25 years and that he never thought it would take this long to address overcrowding. He said that he is in favor of combining student populations and improving the educational experience. He explained that the South Loop community is losing too many diverse families because of selective enrollment. He said that South Loop has grown and doubled in population and they're going to be in the same position they are in now regardless of what side they're on. He said that this is going to have to be addressed and that hard decisions will have to be made. He said that CPS estimates that there are 4,400 students between Printer's Row and I-55 and that the structure needs to be addressed for everyone.

Unknown, South Loop Community Member

He started by saying that he is "not very comfortable being called a racist." He said that "they need to tone down the racism." At this time a group of meeting participants began chanting. He continued saying that he attended community meetings about the need for a high school in the South Loop starting in 2011. He explained that there were a lot of efforts. As the group of participants continued to respond to him, he left.

Unknown, Parent of a 1st Grader at NTA

She began by saying that she picked NTA for its diverse make-up and that her child has never missed a day of school. She explained that she was present at a meeting with Janice Jackson and asked Janice whether she was aware of the South Loop boundary change in 2005. She said that Janice spoke about "how the school improved after so many minority kids left South Loop." At this meeting, she spoke about how South Loop

kids were kicked out and moved to NTA and said that Janice wasn't aware of this, yet Janice had conversations with the mayor in 2016. This parent said that Janice was unaware of the "wrong" that she said she was going to right. This parent concluded by saying that CPS is willing to move around families that were prejudiced against in 2005.

KG, 5th Grader at NTA

KG said that he was representing his teachers and school. He explained that the assistant principal and principal are doing as much as they can. He told Chip Johnson that he understood that he wanted participants to stop talking during presentation, but said that their voices need to be heard. He concluded by saying that if they are moved, they'll have to walk several more blocks to school.

Unknown, 5th grade student NTA

He explained that NTA has many activities, that the proposed action isn't right, and that it could be dangerous for students to walk to South Loop during the cold weather.

Cylis He, South Loop Community Member

He explained that there are a lot of elementary schools within his community and the community needs 2-3 high schools. He explained that only 300 students can enroll in the neighborhood high school. He thanked the people who spoke and said that participants should "let people finish their sentences."

Unknown, Unknown Association

They stated that public services are a right and should be distributed with fairness and not favoritism. They stated that if "you don't have checks and balances, you have favoritism." They said that this situation was non-democratic and that "we talk at each other in these situations." They stated that everyone needs to have a vote and deserves to be able to hold others accountable at the highest level no matter where they stand on this issue.

Unknown, Resident of Bridgeport

She began by saying that she spoke at the last meeting and watched a live stream of the meeting afterwards. She referenced Eve Ewing and said that all participants at the meeting are fighting for their kids. She said that people have not been addressing the millions of dollars that are given to charter schools. She questioned why there are buildings around her community that are "low-income and gang ridden," yet CPS gives money to privately run schools that are not held to same standards as CPS schools. She concluded by saying, "Are you getting bang for your buck with charter schools?"

Unknown, NTA

She began by speaking about the effects of displacement. She stated that negative impacts start 1 year before displacement occurs and continues for 3 years after. She said that the current board has had the most school closures and drop in school ratings. She said that NTA families have been displaced because of previous disclosures and have been kicked out of South Loop before. She asked who has right to continue to destabilize the children who are the most vulnerable. She mentioned that Jacoby

admitted that there 1500 available high school seats and concluded by saying that “none of our people will send our kids there.

Nicole Lee, Resident of Chinatown/NTA

Nicole stated that there are “no winners, only losers with this plan.” She acknowledged the need for a high school and said she doesn’t want kids to have to travel so many miles; that they shouldn’t have to do so in our society today. She concluded by asking “what we are going to do together for every child?”

Sarah Bush, Parent of 2 NTA Students

Sarah said that the proposed plan ignores the concerns of NTA community and disadvantages those who stay at NTA. She asked about the retention of quality teachers and said that future students will lose access to a school that has served low-income, minority students for years. She proposed that CPS explores another way. She concluded by saying that a solution begins with racial equity and respectful collaborative conversation, but that the NTA community has not been heard in the CPS meetings.

Unknown, NTA Parent

They began by saying that politicians are pitting people against one another. They quoted an email between Janice Jackson and the alderman and that Janice believes that closing NTA will increase diversity, but there has been no discussion of how it will negatively impact NTA. She stated that this is a false choice and NTA doesn’t have to be compromised; that the NTA community does not have to accept this choice. She concluded by saying that they will continue to fight against the proposed action and that South Loop students are welcome to come to NTA for elementary school.

Levi, Community Member

Levi said that CPS officials do not reflect society well, they reflect downtown constituents. He said that he understands that CPS must do what’s needed to provide sustenance to their families. He asked what the alternatives are or if this is the only plan. He said that CPS is meeting state mandates required of them before they move onto closing the school. He asked, “Is there another plan?” He said to vote for what’s good for the society and that “we don’t need to be divided.” He concluded by saying that the communities need something “that’s genuine” and that CPS staff likes their salaries. Chip Johnson responded by saying that he couldn’t answer his question about having another plan; that he is just the facilitator.

Unknown, NTA Community Member

He stated that he heard that CPS has the money to build a high school for South Loop. He said that the city has 1.4 billion budget for policing and that the money should be reallocated for education. He said that people can’t allow divisiveness. He said that the proposed actions are gentrifying the community and pushing Black people out. He said that he saw it with the closings. He concluded by saying that the communities need to come together and keep NTA open.

Erika Clark, Parents for Teachers

Erika said that she has been to the hearings and always left so hopeful and energized because of the passion and dedication families have for their schools, but then reality would sink in. She said that they are standing here with people from CPS telling them that they should be respectful. She then asked, “how is attacking Black families in the city over and over again respectful?” She said that CPS doesn’t deserve respect because they are not treating Black communities with respect. She concluded by saying that although Janice Jackson is saying that CPS is going to fix their mistakes, that the proposed action is a big mistake that needs to be fixed and if Janice really wants to fix the mistakes, she needs to stop the proposal, drop the plan, and end school closings.

Unknown, Bronzeville Community Member

He spoke about the history of Bronzeville, referencing the 1998 Bronzeville TIF. He said that it was a Black neighborhood that paid for the school, yet they didn’t go to the school. He said that all the money that went to building the school came from Black people all in the second ward and Bronzeville TIF that paid for this school. He said that the boundaries should move inside the TIF, so the people who paid for the school can have access to what they paid for.

Unknown, Grandparent of NTA student

She began by explaining that this type of action has happened before. She stated that the proposal is politically driven. She explained that NTA community members are not going to want to go to NTA for high school and that it could turn into a selective enrollment school. She concluded that the proposal is about “the money” and that CPS should put the millions of dollars “somewhere else.”

Teneka Brooks, AP at NTA

Teneka began by challenging Chinatown families, Bridgeport families, elected officials, and CPS employees to come to NTA. She said that since March they have talked about the closure, but she hasn’t seen anyone come into NTA. She spoke about the day-to-day of NTA and how visitors will always see children being supported by staff and students, 1st graders leading a seminar comparing texts, middle school students working with primary students, and administration pulling small groups of students. She said that she knows they will make a difference in growth, but that no one has taken the time to see the amazing work in the building. She invited and encouraged participants to take the time to visit NTA.

Chip Johnson briefly acknowledged the aldermen that were present at the meeting.

Joan, Resident of Bronzeville

Joan expressed the need for a better high school that is diverse and will include children in the area. She also expressed the need for a grammar school and concluded by saying that children will thrive “as long as they are included.”

Raquel Don, Unknown Association

Raquel expressed that all children deserved a quality education. She stated that a Level 1+ school isn't defined by just good scores, but also children that are learning, teachers who love their job, compromises of teachers, a support staff, and thriving community. She said that at her school they lack services to teach the students. She explained that they don't have the materials they need, never receive information in Chinese, and that staff members stay late to communicate with children and their families in their native language. She concluded by saying that all children deserve quality education and the Asian community deserves resources so they also have a quality education.

Unknown, NTA Parent and CPS educator/alumni

She spoke about her daughter's educational experience and community experience and how the bonds within the community were solidified through parent encounters, communications, school trips, and fundraisers. She said that this built trustworthy, empowering, resourceful, social bonds that strengthened the school community. She then listed examples of how the community has engaged with each other and the school. She stated that stability is key to the academic and social emotional development of students and that this proposal is not in the best interest of children. She concluded by saying that as an educator of 20 years, she's seen what works and NTA works.

PM, NTA student

PM expressed what will be taken away if the proposed actions take place.

Olivia Shelton, NTA Community Member and Grandmother

Olivia spoke about how NTA is a family and communicates about the learning experience and involves everyone. She said that her grandson has perfect attendance because he never wants to miss a day of school and because he is held accountable and to a high standard. She explained that families and school staff works together and has a culture of respect and achievement. She concluded by saying that her grandson loves NTA, that the principal is "awesome with the kids," and asked Chip Johnson "to work with [them]."

Ted, NTA Community Member

Ted spoke about what he heard at the last meeting: NTA serves the community very well, is successful by every metric, NTA students are inspired, and that not one person wants to merge. He said that too many NTA students will get lost because the school is not designed for their specific needs, that displacement is wrong and the plan to convert NTA into a high school is wrong. He explained that NTA was built to be an elementary school and that as a high school it would be overcrowded. He concluded by saying that no one agrees with the NTA proposal and that the proposed actions would be a shame on Chicago.

Shantell, NTA parent

Shantell explained that she was speaking on behalf of her children. She spoke about how her son questions why CPS won't build another high school. She spoke about her

experience in the suburbs versus her students' experiences at NTA. She also mentioned that the alternatives NTA provided for her "problem child" were very helpful. She concluded by saying that she always viewed Chicago as a great city and how her views of Chicago have now changed.

John, NTA

John spoke about the key injustices and the plan for Public House. He explained that less than half of the houses promised to be built were built. He spoke about his experience working with people from housing on the North Side and how there was a period of limbo and how this is a similar experience. Spoke about how the local school was gone and the difficulties of returning to that area. He encouraged the participants not to miss the opportunity to have a great elementary school. He concluded by saying that students deserve a new high school and that CPS should keep NTA.

Angela, Collision for Chinese Community

Angela spoke about the lack of representation from Chinese community and expressed that organizations have tried to involve community members. She spoke about the language access issue and explained that immigrant parents stay in the geographic boundaries and that their priorities are focused on work. She spoke about how they are limited because of the language barrier and that, ultimately, they do not want to be "fighting for scraps." She concluded by encouraging participants to work together and speak for themselves.

Chip Johnson concluded the meeting by acknowledging the NTA and South Loop principals, telling participants that they could send additional questions via email, and gave the date for the next public hearing at 42 W Madison on January 29th 6:00-8:30 p.m.